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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an effort to implement systems change in a secondary special education/vocational education program. Initial classroom observations and interviews with teachers identified themes of the existing program, including a perception of constant change, use of a new junior high to senior high transition process, and time pressures and conflicts between preparing students for college or for employment. Observation indicated that teachers did not function as a team and that the program components did not fit together. Specifically identified as needing review were the team concept and process, the implementation of study skills classes, and provision of college preparation coursework. Other issues identified included the need for more co-teaching, the attitudes of regular educators, and the need to reconfigure ownership of students and teacher relationships. Two areas of frustration mentioned by teachers were social skills of students and parental attitudes and levels of information. (DB)

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A Consultant's Use of Qualitative Methods in Implementing Systems Change: A Snapshot of a Ridgeview High School Program in Special Education

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Systems change. These words have been the focus of research efforts and funding over the years. In spite of many laudable outcomes, concerns have surfaced in the literature. New tools for assessing and monitoring the process of change, along with participation of personnel involved in the process of change are needed to capture the mirage of changes that occur in the complex culture and climate of schools and classrooms. Traditional research tools, with an almost exclusive reliance on quantifiable measures, have proven unsatisfactory in measuring and evaluating many of these changes. Suggestions for capturing these changes have been suggested, and some attempts have been made to use qualitative tools and/or combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods (Ferguson, Jeanchild, & Carter, 1991; Ferguson, Ferguson, & Taylor, 1992).

A second concern is the discrepancy between commonly accepted best practice indicators and their widespread implementation in the field. This issue has been documented along with messages that research and commitment need to address reasons for the discrepancy and solutions to current barriers (Putnam & Bruininks, 1986; Hill, Seyfarth, Banks, Wehman, & Orlove, 1987; Meyer, Eichinger, & Park-Lee, 1986). One strategy recommended for supporting and monitoring systems change, that

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may also assist in the process of decreasing and/or understanding the discrepancy noted above, is the use of quantitative evaluation methods to identify critical and idiosyncratic variables particular to systems that are undergoing changes. In this way the culture of the system and the climate for change can be included as a variable that supports or inhibits certain kinds of outcomes.

An effort to implement systems change in a secondary program is the subject of this paper. The purpose and data collection process of the report are described. All references to the actual school and personnel have been changed in this paper. The report was submitted to personnel (teachers, instructional aides, administrators), and their reactions and issues were used to direct systems change. The initial reactions of personnel, as well as reactions of the consultants, are shared along with the report below.

A Snapshot of a High School Program

In the winter of 1992 a special education teacher, with the support of the consulting teacher and special education administrator, submitted a proposal for a range of changes and related outcomes in the area of secondary/vocational and transitions practices. The proposal was reviewed by the funding agency and approved for support. After numerous discussions and reviews of the changes and outcomes with the consulting teacher, vocational teacher, and administrator, the consultant and the special education director reframed the purpose and methods of support for the project. Rather than proceed with outlines of

changes and measures of implementation (e.g., number of students supervised on the job, wages earned), the teachers would work with the consultant to describe their current program and provide their suggestions and critiques of what existed. The report would provide the personnel with an outsider's glimpse of them and their program and raise questions, which they would address. From the perspective in the report, reviewed over the summer, the teachers and administrators would outline team directions for changes and strategies to effect changes. It was discussed at the onset that this initial evaluation might change the priorities from what were in the initial proposal. There was some hesitation on the part of the vocational teacher to change, but also a willingness to proceed. All changes were cleared with the funding agency.

Beginning the Observations and Interviews

As I walked up the steps of Ridgeview High School I found myself saying, "Now this is a high school!" The building was substantial, with stone steps and large, heavy doors that open into an entrance way. The students who walked out the doors during this change of classes seemed almost like a poster for America 2000 . . . smiling, talking, some arm in arm. The haze of drugs and cat calls I have waded through in so many other high schools were noticeably absent.

The first stop was at the office to check in with the principal, Tom Wittworth, to introduce myself, Debra (a second consultant), and the project. The office atmosphere was casual, matching the first impression of the school. It took an effort to introduce

ourselves to the office person at the typewriter, who ignored office traffic and congestion, to have her locate the principal for our meeting. Sitting in the hall outside the principal's office and watching the ebb and flow of office traffic confirmed the previous impressions of a casual atmosphere. The meeting with Tom Wittworth was invigorating and interesting. His presence was felt immediately through his firm handshake, smile, and direct and friendly style. The introductions were made and the agenda reviewed: We would listen to teachers, probe, observe, and offer a picture of the special education program for later review and discussion. We decided to communicate by memo, as needed, since the dates of observations were not confirmed and Tom's spring schedule required substantial travel.

We began a tour of classes and work sites and interviews with teachers and instructional assistants. I conducted classroom observations and teacher and staff interviews while Debra visited students on work sites and met with the job coach. Our agenda was simple. In the brief amount of time left in the spring semester we would collect a snapshot of the Ridgeview special education program and teachers, including their anticipated changes and concerns. In the course of seven days, within approximately a month, we gathered perspectives on the program, climate, and instruction. We talked with all teachers, usually for about an hour, observed all classrooms and took careful notes, and visited eight work sites to observe different students. We taped and transcribed the interviews with teachers. In addition, we transcribed our fieldnotes from observations and casual discussions with

instructional staff, from a group meeting, and from phone contacts. The account I share below is our impression and understanding about the Ridgeview High School special education program during a relatively brief glimpse.

During the course of our observations the comfortable and casual atmosphere of the school and special education program did not diminish. It doesn't take a visitor long to pick up on the genuine concern for students felt by teachers and to notice the disabilities experienced by the students. The openness of most teachers never dimished during our observations, but we soon saw concerns and tensions wearing and pulling at them and the parts of the program. In fact, the image of the program began to appear as one of many disjointed parts--some excellent--that needed to be connected and fine tuned.

Changes in the Program

The special education program had undergone a number of changes over the past seven or eight years. These included a new director of special education, a new principal, three new teachers (one within the last year), a new consulting teacher model, curriculum expansion to include students with more severe challenges into classes and vocational preparation, adapted classes for students on the academic track, and a junior high to senior high transition process. In the words of one teacher, "We are always doing something new. We never remain the same from year to year." Some changes applied to schedules that were arranged and rearranged each year to meet the academic needs of students.

Other changes seemed to be more pervasive in their scope and infusion in the program.

The most impressive change, and one mentioned by all teachers, was the transition process as students moved from the junior to the senior high. Each teacher described the process and information as useful in formatting the high school program for students. The parental input into the process was also emphasized. The value of the process and information seemed apparent, and two teachers offered detailed examples of how the information was used. They also expressed the desire to make the best decisions for students, given the graduation restraints and time limitations. In addition, one teacher described the out-of-school transition and its value as a process to prepare a transition document and guide instruction to achieve outcomes in the transition plan. The clarity of this discussion and the genuine concern for students expressed by this teacher were repeated themes in the drive to improve. Other teachers seemed to view the transition document and process with the junior high as an outline for high school classes. I had questions about their use of the process to plan for success in life. Most indicated little information regarding follow-up contact with graduates, beyond some incidental conversations with former students who returned to school for a visit, or who teachers encountered in the community.

Another theme, time pressures and conflicts between college preparation, graduation, and work preparation emerged as an ongoing concern during the whole visit. Teachers expressed a need for students to begin an academic track the first year of high

school if students wanted to receive a regular high school diploma. These teachers also felt that most students would benefit from the content of the careers classes and the community-based-vocational program. Teachers noted that some students in academic classes were not learning much. All teachers noted that most students wanted to leave school and graduate at age 18.

Other changes and aspects of the program seemed to be in the state of emergence rather than full implementation. These included the offering of the study skills class, adapted and/or co-taught classes for regular and special education students, resource room and life skills, and the coordination and scope and sequence of career and work exploration. In most cases, lack of full implementation was not a result of inadequate attention from individual teachers and administration, but rather a result of probing questions and concerns generated by some teachers, parents, and other instructional staff, as well as a lack of time to "really think through changes and directions." Changes in teaching staff and perspectives have also had an impact. A new teacher is being hired for the students with more severe challenges, and teachers expressed hesitation to plan too much before this person was a known quantity. It was impressive to see most teachers, immersed in working with students, still generating ideas toward the improvement of the program. Suggestions were rooted in concerns for students and the preparation of these students for post-secondary life and careers. As one teacher stated:

> I don't want a kid to come back and say, "You know I decided I wanted to be a police officer and I can't go because I didn't have the right things when I was in high school."

Another teacher voiced a similar concern about adequate preparation:

> If they are going to fail do it here. I mean (if they fail) because of the lack of job skills fail while they are in school so they can be taught what they did wrong instead of graduating them (and having them) going out and failing and getting fired and having no reference after that.

Planning time and multiple demands also limit the implementation. A comment on the need for reflection captures what this team of teachers may be experiencing and what this observer sees as critical:

> When we say we're going to do something the honest (statement) is we don't think and talk things out enough.

A Chance to Listen

Listening and observing afforded an opportunity to congeal many of the hurried expressions of "needs for change" and concerns about "the best for the students" offered by the staff. It was clear to this observer after the first interviews and some observations that the teachers were not "a team" and that they were not clear about how the program components fit or didn't fit together. Those teachers and instructional staff that worked in the same rooms knew the most about each other's program and students' needs. One teacher felt isolated from the group and another teacher felt fine teaching away from their rooms and with minimal contact. In spite of having information about each other's program and students, the

teachers who shared room space had visible difficulty in accepting and/or adapting to each other's teaching style and methods. The group meeting I held was strained. Each teacher seemed more ready to listen to suggestions from an outsider than to express ideas of her or his own. The discussion generated was labored, and I felt teachers were uncomfortable in this situation and held back their ideas, critiques, concerns, and suggestions. It was as if to critique a program was to blame a teacher. One teacher left the meeting without explanation. I left the meeting with a lot of questions. Consensus and majority opinions too often define a team. Could this have been a factor in their reluctance to reflect and discuss? Does "team" refer to an administrative concept or process assumed to operate here? Wass this a group of people in search of their mission and goals together? Was there ever a "team" in this program?

Unlike the group meeting, individual interviews and casual observations revealed talkative teachers with suggestions for major changes and fine tuning the existing program. With a new teacher joining the program in the fall, the timing for reviewing "a team" concept and process was critical. The staff seemed ready to begin the process of more clearly defining how the "team" and program components may or may not have been working. The strategies of the teachers and areas of interest and commitment were diverse. The team process and function will need to be individualized to accommodate this range of skills and interests.

The purpose and focus of study skills were mentioned by three teachers as areas needing review. I observed the atmosphere of these classes as casual and supportive, and yet there is a fine line between constructing this atmosphere and being too lenient and not setting high enough expectations for students. One teacher expressed this frustration and paraphrased another teacher's frustrations:

> We don't do enough. We let them sit and bring their own work in and we let them talk us out of doing stuff like, "We have this to do, can we do it?" That's fine. That's what we're here for, but too much of that is something else.

A review of fieldnotes on study skills classes during this very limited interval, revealed questions were raised about how the class differed from just a study hall. One teacher brainstormed on looking at changes in the class to refocus it as a study hall or a study skills class for all students. Another teacher noted some students didn't need the class. Another noted it could be tied to more hands-on experience in the world of work and teach the same concepts and skills. One teacher questioned why students needed to take it after their sophomore year. The study skills class seemed worth further review and discussion.

A third focus for change was adapting classes and/or mainstreaming students in college preparation coursework. This and graduation requirements raised some interesting and innovative issues. The first issue was the ownership of students and teachers' roles when special education students attended regular classes. Classes discussed were Biology, Government,

English, and History. The latter three have been adapted, and now issues of support arise:

> There is no reason for me to be in Government sitting there waiting to see what's going to happen . . . an aide is sitting over there waiting to see what's going to happen. Or (for me) to go over there at the end of the hour and say, "Is there anything I can run off for you to help?" There is no reason for two teachers to be in there right now. So the aide being over there right now to (do) what is needed. Just to say, "Well, you've done a good job for four years now and you get them all by yourself," would be completely wrong because he does a good job with them.

Two teachers commented at different times that the Government teacher was excellent and the class was going well for students. I wondered why it would be wrong to fade out of this class? Does this Government teacher and other general educators have a perspective to offer?

Observations on the adapted curriculum generated more comments and one teacher noted, "I think as a group we need to do more co-teaching." Another teacher always sent the aide from the room to Health with students to adapt materials and wasn't able to describe the class. Other teachers noted that aides could do the work to a point. In Government, the materials were on tape and some of the adaptations were already set up, so the aide was able to handle the class, and the teacher was excellent. An observation in a Biology class during the week I observed was shared by one teacher during the group discussion:

> Our kids do nothing during a lab when they're dissecting because they were given oral directions. Some wrote them down and some didn't ever get (understand) the directions. I was curious how far they got. (The next day I found out it

> was) about half as far as they said they did. I listened to one of the girls tell somebody in sixth hour how far she had gotten with her fish . . . I went back the next day and it hadn't even been cut open. And it was just a case of not having the help. It wasn't that they couldn't do it. I think (they just need) more direction (and I talked to the teacher) and he wasn't disgusted and he wasn't mad. He just said some of them must really need a lot of help.

During the group exchange and with a study skills teacher ideas were generated about reviewing staffing arrangements and not staying in one "regular" class all year. The exchange in the group revealed that this concept of fading out was a recent idea, and teachers needed more time and assistance to think and reflect on this, as well as a review of their commitment to implement more inclusion/mainstreaming. The group discussion was helpful and began to reveal "habits" of staffing classes that were not necessarily functional anymore.

Along with the issue of more co-teaching, an issue of attitudes of regular educators emerged. The attitudes were described as ranging from, "I don't need help as long as I know what kids I'm getting and where they are at . . . maybe I'll need some materials and assistance with the reading materials. I get paid for doing this for kids," to, "I'll grade and teach my way and if they don't learn the way I teach it, then they flunk it." The participants concluded that there were few of the latter and some exceptional teachers like the first. The issue of other kids in the regular class who could benefit from adapted worksheets and other changes was also raised. How special and regular education teachers co-teach and which kids receive what adaptations and from whom was the issue. This observer saw deeper issues that eventually surfaced--

who owned the kids and how should the teachers get along was one of those issues. Another part of the instructional piece was the students who were 504 eligible. This issue was noted by teachers as potentially having an impact on special education programs. This issue was too large for this project and the special education group to consider. What was evident was these teachers were beginning to discover, in a deeper sense, that co-teaching and inclusion models require a rethinking of students beyond "yours, mine, or ours." Merely saying the words "yours and mine" or "our students" does not get to the fundamental need to reconfigure ownership of students and how teachers need to get along.

Careers classes and work exploration units were curricular areas identified by all teachers and instructional aides as somehow needing expansion and revised sequencing. Teachers concluded that many students needed to be better prepared, needed more "hands on" review of career options, and more supervision. All teachers felt that the option of taking a class earlier (sophomore year) was needed for many students, and a three- or four-week rotation through a variety of work places for a semester prior to placement for a quarter of semester were mentioned by two teachers. One teacher offered detailed ideas about how the rotation could be implemented and why students would benefit from this format. Suggestions for embedding this in the coursework were discussed. I found the description convincing and rooted in an understanding of how students learn and outcomes that should be expected for students and their families. However, it took effort on my part to keep this teacher from getting into

individual student/family crisis in this discussion and losing her thread of thought. Another teacher expressed doubts about the usefulness of in-school resource room and life skills instruction. The conversation did not go much beyond using the words community-based and academics; probing questions were answered on the surface level and graduation requirements were left unaddressed. I found myself asking, as I listened to teachers, "Could the skills of timeliness, responsibility, time management, and note-taking from study skills and the adapted academics be taught within a work or community context? Could the reworking of staffing assignments support more intense supervision and instruction? What teachers could best implement this?"

Observations of seven students on eight job sites over four days indicated that students were not problem solving or carrying out responsibilities as needed. In one instance, a student was working for 15 minutes at a woodshop, watching others for 45 minutes, and getting paid for an hour of work. His response to, "Have you finished your work?" was a phrase about his having just taken out the garbage and thus he was finished. Another student, placed at a day care, was rated as "satisfactory" on her work evaluation and had undertaken appropriate procedures for a planned absence. I wondered if the instruction, beyond what was on the evaluation sheet, had been planned for this student? Another student had completed her dusting and message jobs and hadsupervised and instructed another student with severe challenges. The issue of preparation for a more demanding job might well be an issue for her as well, especially since her job

was at the high school. How can a one-shot placement opportunity fulfill all these issues? At another site the "mistakes" of a student counting out cups of beans could be "practiced" at school. School assessment should determine if mistakes are due to boredom (as hypothesized), skills deficits related to the disability, image problems a student might have with the job, and any number of additional rationale or idiosyncratic reasons. I wondered if any students had instruction directly related to what they could or couldn't do on their job? Appropriate interventions, revising of programs, and coordinated school and work instruction are well within the capabilities of the "careers" teacher and would facilitate student learning. Many aspects of the vocational curricular activities were exceptional, including the use of employer and employee evaluations. Fine tuning would certainly result in an exemplary program for students. Again, with a new teacher entering the program, the impetus for refocusing and refining could begin in the fall.

The Teachers Teach

We were impressed by the atmosphere of caring and support that most teachers and instructional support staff provided for the students. There was not a day that we didn't share some of their frustrations with trying to impress upon young adolescents the importance of learning today in preparation for tomorrow. Conversations of students overheard in classes, "What will you wear tonight?," "I'll get some money and put a muffler on it," "Gonna put straight pipes on it?," "I couldn't find a sub-topic" (a

response after goofing off and being questioned by a watchful teacher), supported the difficulty teachers expressed with refocusing students on the relation of academics (learning) and their future. Each class had students who seemed motivated, needed extra help, and seemed to be less than motivated. Each teacher used different tactics and instructional strategies to respond to students. Most teachers used cooperative learning and heterogeneous grouping and did so effectively. Some, when asked, discussed how they kept track of student progress, and others were not clear on these methods or the criterion. Observations in classes revealed different strategies for handling student responses. In one class, the book Durango Street was read out loud to students. Two students had their books open and seemed to be following along. The remainder of the students had their books closed and heads down on their desks. The teacher asked questions: "What was the social worker trying to do?" and, "This book is old, what would we call them today?" which elicited responses from two students. These two students answered all questions and no attempts were made to involve others. There was no group discussion or written assignment. I left as the teacher continued to read. Other sessions in this class involved students viewing films.

In another class, the teacher handed out assignments for written work and engaged the class in discussions about renting and signing a lease. A group in the back was talking and off-task. The teacher ignored them but walked closer. The students talked out during the session with funny and sometimes appropriate

comments. The teacher laughed with them and then followed up with information that was relevant to reviewing and signing a lease. The assignment was structured for small groups, and students rearranged chairs as needed. I listened to the student groups read the scenarios out loud and settle down to discussing possible answers and a written response. Listening to the students' discussions, I concluded they needed this topic and the chance to brainstorm. They negotiated the answer they finally wrote down. Most initial suggestions were only partly correct, and some were incorrect. The group discussion seemed to help them crystalize their responses and consider other perspectives. The teacher walked around the room and answered individual and group questions or queried students about their answers. The atmosphere stayed casual and noisy, and work was produced.

A third teacher was observed in a study skills class. Most students sat at desks working on individual homework. Two students received instruction from the teacher or the aide, one student worked on writing a paper using the computer, and another student used a calculator to finish a math worksheet. The room hummed with discussions and the sounds of chairs and bodies being readjusted. The teacher left a student she was tutoring, checked with the student at the computer, chatted with her, and offered suggestions on paragraph formation and using the spell check. Assignments of three students in the back (who were talking) were reviewed, and in a firm, quiet manner, they were reminded of their deadlines and the need for facts in their speech. A visit to the library was recommended. The work of the student with the

calculator was corrected by the aide and instruction was given to assist him. The teacher circulated among the desks and then walked back to provide more tutoring.

A fourth teacher was observed in a study skills class. He had not appeared in the Government and History classes where I went to observe him co-teaching, and this observation was unexpected. He sat at a desk, feet up on the desk top, and chatted with students. The assignment was handwritten on an overhead for the students. They were requested to read a newspaper article of their choice, write three questions on the article, and then answer the questions. Students talked at their desks, but also worked on the assignment. All students handed in an assignment. I reviewed the student papers at the end of the session. About one-third of the students appeared to have good writing and spelling skills, their questions/answers were interesting, their papers neat and easy to review. Another one-third had spelling errors (even though the words were in the article) and wrote fairly simple questions with one- or two- word answers. The remaining one-third had difficulties with the assignment in terms of writing questions, grammar, spelling, and using more than one- or two-word phrases. In addition, their penmanship was difficult to read. Answers from the teacher about grading the papers were unclear beyond "on improvement" and the task was turned over to the aide. I wondered how instruction for at least one-third of these students was implemented. I wondered why some students were in this session.

Two other areas of frustration mentioned by teachers were social skills of students and parental attitudes and levels of

information. The social skills were seen as problematic for students who were basically without many friends or supports and/or getting in trouble with the law. Descriptions of the problems were given by all teachers on more than one occasion. Some concerns were expressed as:

> He's got some real attitude problems that on the job . . . I'm not sure what will happen to him.
>
> He just needed to be "slapped in the face" before he could understand that . . . you can't steal.
>
> A student in first hour that has very few friends . . . expects a lot (of interactions and friendship) from teachers . . . gets along with younger children.
>
> They run with a crowd that definitely gets them in trouble with the law . . . maybe only 5% that would run with the crowd and . . . be able to step back from the crowd . . . if . . . faced with a choice (of) breaking the law.
>
> I can count half a dozen right now who are in trouble with the law (because of) peer pressure.
>
> This kid is so lonely . . . I'm afraid I'm graduating him to isolation.
>
> They can be real rational . . . we discuss in study skills . . . should I take this bicycle that is setting out in front of this store. They can tell you this is what I would do . . . but I couldn't honestly say I believe (they) will really do that.
>
> Oh, they'll space off and sit down on the job . . . listen to others talk and not do their work.
>
> A lot of these kids don't have the social skills to (talk or ask questions) of the supervisor.
>
> Kids that were never motivated . . . they'll come in and right away it's someone else's fault. It can never be that kid's

> fault. . . and if they are wrong they are wrong just because that's the way it is. They are looking for an excuse.
>
> He's pulling the right chains . . . because after fighting the kid for 15 minutes you figure, well, he's not causing any problems so . . . if you give 15 minutes, that's a heck of an effort.
>
> Unmotivated (kids) they just don't want to do anything . . . and blaze is they just don't care . . . and (then) kids that are interested.
>
> 50% will go the trouble way and 50% of them have enough sense to say, "No, I'm not going to do that . . . but I don't think 50% would go along if it was . . . serious, like stealing a car."

The range of descriptions and beliefs about intervening with social skills was varied. Teachers felt that, "Although it is covered in social skills and careers," it is not enough or not effective in changing student behavior. So many teachers voiced concerns and frustration with social relations/networks, that program effectiveness, outcomes, expectations, and curricula seemed an area that needed to be revisited.

Statements about students' social skills were often directly followed by statements that indicated to me that parents were seen as contributing to the problem. Some concerns expressed were: Parents question being in school if the kid isn't doing anything there; parents/family give kids everything and they don't have to work for it, and, they thus support the kid being lazy and unmotivated. Parents don't have the right information to help their kids or know how to help their kids. Some parents provide "no discipline" or think that "regardless of what their kids do, they're not doing anything wrong and . . . it wasn't their fault, someone else made them do it." Two teachers suggested a number of things they

would like to try to do to give information to parents, and all seemed quite affected by their views of parents. There may or may not be much that can be done to "fix" what teachers see as wrong, but given the energy this issue generated and drew from teachers, a discussion on perspectives for working with parents may be helpful.

Last Comments

There are many things that are not covered in this report, either, because the information we generated did not supply enough detail, or because it seemed to be an individual, isolated instance. The time we spent in the program and school was brief. It is our hope that we captured the climate and culture of the program and our expectation that we got some of it wrong and most of it right. I enjoyed my time in Ridgeview and was inspired by the deep care and concern teachers have for students. Change is happening at the high school, and teachers have a critical focus: a deep and caring concern for students. The opportunity to reflect and think through planned changes can only help this program. I feel the funding for the project and funding for change at Ridgeview High School is money pretty well spent. The outcome of the money spent is not so much in tangible and measurable outcomes as it is in opportunities for teachers and other professional staff to be heard and to reflect on their conversations in ways that will most likely support change.

To the district, administrators, teachers, and other professional staff, I would say thank you for taking the risk and

letting an outsider in for a glimpse at a program investing in quality and change. I offer my encouragement and support. It is easy to change for change sake and get lost in the process. I encourage you to take the alternate and tougher route.

Reflections on the Report

This process of consultation and reflection was as beneficial to me as it was to the teachers, instructional staff, and administrators. Follow-up discussions with the consulting teacher, special education director, and some teachers indicated that we had gotten it mostly right in our snapshot of Ridgeview. The schedules of the teachers were revised for Fall to enable a two-hour monthly team meeting. The first agenda for Fall was a team-building process. Concern regarding the non-teaching teacher was addressed and plans for him in the team process were tentatively addressed. For my part, I was amazed at how my perspectives changed. I certainly believe the district needs to either build or scrap the team idea, but starting with that was not on the original list of outcomes and processes. Given the vocational and transitional focus of the funding, and my inclinations to "get it started and in place," I would have started with the vocational teacher and her aide to increase coordination of school and nonschool work instruction, a staffing plan for implementing this, and more intense supervision on sites. In retrospect, the report revealed that staffing this change would be problematic without some more cohesive integration of the personnel at the high school. These efforts might even be ignored

and criticized to the point of reducing their impact. In addition, the perspectives that surfaced regarding families and social relationships of students became much more of a priority for me, even though these were not addressed on the initial proposal. In retrospect, it might have been better to focus on working well with families rather than on the vocational/transition process and outcomes. How involved could these families be in transitions, and how could teachers implement plans with input from students and families with these feelings about many families dragging them down?

Where to start and how to measure systems change? Each reader will most likely respond with different answers to this question for this district based on their history with the systems change and their particular professional interests and background. Systems change is tied so intimately with the complexity and culture of a district/school/program, and merely stating and measuring objective outcomes seems to ignore the influence of complexity and culture on changes. The list of objective outcomes measures (page 2) will still be used (and should be used) in the systems change process. There is some progress underway in the program. However, if only these measures were used, and if the initial self-study had not been conducted using another methodology, the deeper changes embedded in teacher reflection and decisions regarding the nature and functioning of these high school professionals as a group may have been ignored along with their profound influence on the program. The team may continue on in its same state; or with the addition of a new teacher and this

outsider's perspective, the group may move to less of an avoidance process of discussion and possibly to open sharing and problem solving. It is this decision that will then determine how much and to what extent other outcomes can be achieved. It is this decision that will in some way determine whether these outcomes will be reinforced, accepted, or ignored by the team. It is this decision that will influence the role administrators will take in the implementation of changes to enhance the program already in place.

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